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departure

A MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

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DEPARTURE

VOLUME TWO NUMBER SIX

FUNCTIONS AND HERESIES

WHEN *Departure* was founded two years ago there were scarcely any large literary magazines. Now that they exist it might seem that the importance of the smaller publication is diminished to that of a footnote to the literary scene. We do not believe this is true. However impressive and catholic the pages of the bigger monthlies, their purpose consists essentially in bringing new writing before a wide, general public. To such magazines, the best little magazines stand in much the same relation as the weekly journals of comment take towards the daily newspapers. As the weeklies contain no 'news' in the ordinary sense (unless it be news which they feel should be brought to the attention of the dailies) so the little magazines will not concern themselves with the currency of the monthlies (unless to present writers whom the monthlies might profitably notice). An important function of the little magazine is to present a literary point of view, and they might do this with any kind of instrument from the altruistic stringency of a *Scrutiny* to the satiric force of Wyndham Lewis' magazines. They can, quite unashamedly, remain specialist publications whose task is to influence currents of thought in literary matters—and not try to emulate the monthlies in what they, in any case, can often do much better.

Part of this task consists inevitably in the detection of literary heresy. Since the public for even the largest magazines is now small, any doctrine disseminated with a degree of skill and persuasiveness is liable to attract attention, and may even get itself regarded as representing a significant trend in literary thought and practice. Of such a kind is the recent belief, on the part of some newer novelists, that the intelligent man may, or should, 'opt out' of a society that does little or nothing to cultivate his higher values. Is such an 'opting out' possible? In England, there is no opting out of the armed forces of the Crown in such a way as to leave you much freedom of action. There is no opting out of income tax, if you have a job. And even if you have no job, thereby opting out of gainful employment, you are not rid of your weekly obligations to National Insurance. Aristotle wittily analysed the impossible position into which these novelists have manoeuvred their heroes: 'The man who is isolated, who is unable to share the benefits of a political community or who has no need to share them since he is already self-sufficient, is no part of the *polis*. He must therefore be either a beast or a god.' And this dictum applies even more to our own society than it did to Aristotle's.

JON SILKIN

The Cunning of an Age

The fox sat under the hill.
And all around him the day was springing the earth
Curved away in a style he knew to be home;
The year grew round him like a home, the birds
Cried down the wind

And the air hummed with growing.
He smelt the humble plants at the foot of the hill.
The grass was bleeding like love and the insects stirred
In the air at ease with themselves. The black wind streamed
Over the top of the hill.

Only here had he made a home.
The ways of the world had stopped short of this bulge
On the surface of things because . . . because it had other
Things to do. And the fox sat under the hill
And all lay still.

Yet as he sat there wondering
How rivers came to be, especially
His one at the edge of the world his world, a spot
Of red spat up at his eyes, no more, and was gone
In a twist of vision. No more than that

To the fox who sat under the hill.
The air was the same the year went round just the same
The insects turned around in their aimless journeys.
But just that red at the foot of the hill below
The stream had changed things.

Had changed his home
To a starting place, and below came the horn's winding
Warning halloo and up he was and smartly
Away as the red shot up to his horizon
And his mind's horizon.

And he was away.
No listening or waiting for the will and lust
Of the world but to live and lick his life
From the corners of a world that would hold him easily
Peacefully was his will.

Under a hill of maiden-hair
And grass as green as blood and summer-time
To sweat in his fur and his ways. He was off to save
His life. The hounds were baying the other side
Of the hill. And

He thought as he ran with his name
Of the names he'd been told and the games he'd been called, but the horn
Whirled round in his head and the hounds fell on
In the leaps that distance and time pulls on one, the tricks
The mind pulls on one.

And the wind changed his name
To FOLLOWED from Fox-on-the-hill
And the wind followed, curling his brush. And the hounds
followed too,
Like dreams like death on the hill like birds like grass
Like anything but not

Like fox he was
Or fox he knew and the horn curled round in his head
Slipping over the hill and into his head. But here
He swerved and hid. And the hounds went hurling past
With blood before

Their eyes, and the men and the world
With blood over their hands and a curse on their whips
And a horse on their world and a horn on their minds
Went for a day
Over down the hill.

MARGARET STRAHAN

Madonna

Mary,
born of the thorn month,
of unbidden blossom and forgotten snow,
where the bare tusks of the briar
carve the sudden ivory of the sky
and scar the wind,
and winter whimpering fingers of the trees
plead for leaves.

Madonna in image still descent,
your image bow unbent each latent wave to bud its spray,
around the image shivered air each hollow unblossomed
an image sea across a sky of waves,
stricken for fruits have plucked your palms
an image rose.
Rose Jesus with the dawn
and thorns the sea entangled,
still rose metal each chaining wave
still across a sun to stun in peaks.

Madonna caught in a marble garden in a circle of limbless trees,
Madonna at whose hand shadows immobile stand,
Madonna of the sacrifice, stare
at your ivory forests in a skein of hair,
your image cattle shivered where they graze
by limbless trees and streams unmoving
in their age.

Mary, yours the palms that bled his road,
that plucked the fruits of crucifixion from each wave.
Mary, the silver crossed your palm in alms,
alms for the bowl of gold rocking the water.
Mary, born of the thorn month,
of unbidden blossom and forgotten snow,
where the bare tusks of the briar
carve the silent ivory of the sky
and scar the wind.

It is the same if I lie on the left or the right side,
Cut a melon, or let the water
Shine in the glass, the candle's grace
Behind it: meaningless this as floating air
In the night without you.

Outside my window a peacock alighted
In the afternoon, like a shadowy bouquet of flowers.
You held your spoon in the 6 o'clock sun
Over the glistening fruit on your plate.
Now I endure the dark,
This night not made by you,
Filled in with stiff, black paint,
With the taste of tears in the mouth
And sharp wind in the flowers.

Behind the tile cracked with blackness
The cicada is still, and I have had
The flavour of loneliness to taste at table,
Between silence and silence
In the night without you.

It is the same if I lie on the left or the right side
In the embrace of silence, when the wrist-watch
Lightly counts time, and the end of the cigarette turns to ash . . .
My finger gently moves through the beyond
Where I lived even now,
Without red kerchief and brown shoes,
In the night without you:

I hear you breathing under stars!

From DIE ZEICHEN DER WELT

Translation by Marianne Leibholz

PHILIP OAKES

The Death of the Referee

A shroud, a shroud for Spring-Heeled Jack,
The only honest referee,
A crowd to keep the devil back
And sing in tune Abide with Me.

The pit unlocks its cage of doves
To tumble in the dirty air,
And far below the coffin drives
To meet the council and the mayor.

The barges drag through stiff canals,
Milky with clay and black with coal,
And as the varnished coffin falls
The mayor proclaims the grave no goal.

The colours of the local club
Flower to hide the yellow clay,
And all the foundry hammers throb
Their solace of the working day.

At home the silver trophies burn
About the mourning company,
And wishing she could be alone
The widow pours out cups of tea.

For Jack is dead, the man on springs,
Whose whistle trapped the wildest ball,
Whose portrait done in oils now hangs
For ever in the Civic Hall.

Burly with cataracts, the eyes,
Are blind at last to local fame
And friends who fail to recognise
A stranger in the golden frame.

But those who know their loss will make
The winter field his funeral,
And peel their caps to Spring-Heeled Jack
While brass bands play the March in Saul.

THE BRIDGE

by John Hearne

THEY stopped the jeep about noon by the steep bank where the chestnut trees grew down to the roadside. Ian MacAlla got out first, swinging himself lithely on to the warm, dusty road from the front seat where he sat beside the sergeant who had driven them from the coast. The sergeant's name was Logan ; and he and MacAlla had been together for most of the war.

' Get the lunch out,' MacAlla told Sergeant Logan. ' This is a good place to eat. I'll be along in a minute.'

He began to walk away from the jeep, down the steep road lined with chestnuts ; towards the bend in the road from where you could see the plain below.

When he had gone a little way Sergeant Logan called after him. ' I'll take the grub up under the trees, eh sir?'

' Yes, *sir*,' the sergeant said to the pink long-faced private who was picking up, in the back seat, the side pack with their rations, ' that's the sort of war I like to fight. Lunch in the woods. This is a lovely way to fight a war. Come on, Horsie, let's go.'

Horsie was the name the private had acquired in the short time since he had come out from England to this theatre of the war. He followed the sergeant as the man scrambled up the bank into the deeper shade of the trees. They sat down under one, leaning their backs against the trunk, and waiting for their officer.

At the bend in the road Ian MacAlla stopped and stood with his legs slightly apart, his head bent a little forward. He took off the floppy-crowned, peaked cap and let the small mountain breeze blow across his fair, bleached hair. The war had not troubled this part of the country much. There had been a lot of fighting at the sea, and for a little way inland. And now farther up among the mountains, near the passes, there was more fighting. But from where he stood there was almost no destruction to see. Hardly any sign, even, of military activity except for a few trucks on the plain below which were driving up to the front.

Across the plain the road was cast in a clean straight line. It ran between pale-green, undulating sweeps of corn, dark rows of orange, and tightly rolled columns of cypress. The houses on the plain were, from where he stood, distinct small cubes with red roofs and flamboyant sides. Each village and cluster of houses was set amidst fruit trees and shade trees.

When the road reached the foothills it suddenly began to coil and twist under the stress of the mountains. It vanished and reappeared endlessly among the drab green of the olive groves and brighter,

precise vineyards. There was a broad valley on his left with vineyards up the sides. And far away behind his right hand were hazy blue peaks. That was where the fighting was.

Far down on the flat land, just beyond a village, was an abandoned half-track lying on its side, half in, half out of the ditch beside the white road. Here and there among the green and the rocks of the hillsides there were dug-outs and machine-gun emplacements that had never been used because the war had gone through this place so quickly.

MacAlla stood quite still at the bend in the road, filling himself carefully with the country that surrounded him. He had not seen this place for nearly five years. Not since the year before the war, but before that he used to come to it often. He had been very much afraid, during all the years he was fighting his way towards it, that this country he loved and knew so well had been destroyed, burnt up and broken like all the other countries and places he had passed through. And then this morning, when he had driven up from the coast and seen how much the land had been spared, something in his stomach had slowly, warmly and pleasantly relaxed. As they had climbed the mountain road and he had seen the men and the women working among the vines he had come to feel a sense of gratitude far stronger than his fear of going back to the war.

He stretched himself happily in the hot mountain sun, took three great breaths of pure excitement, then turned and walked quickly back to where the sergeant and the private sat under the chestnut trees. Beside the hard rations of biscuit and tinned beef they had two kilos of peaches which he had bought earlier in the morning down on the plain. He had also bought two bottles of red wine and three of those thick little tumblers you get in the cheaper wine shops. By the time they had reached the fruit he was a little drunk with the wine, and with the happiness of coming back to this antique, indestructible country, and finding so much of it the same and undestroyed.

He looked at the dark, tight face of Sergeant Logan and the pink, long face of the young private who had not been in any of the fighting yet. He wanted, very much, to tell them what this day and this place meant to him. But he did not try because he knew his feeling and his happiness was the sum of too many things. It was the magical and delicate addition of the wine and the big bronze peaches which they dipped into the wine between each bite. Also, it was the hard graceful landscape, and the 3,000-year habits of farming and husbandry the people were practising among the olives and the vineyards. It was the pale, very clear sky shifting behind the restless leaves. For him, too, it had the flavour and memory of a great many books, poems and works of art which he did not think the others would be able to share. But all through the meal, which was eaten in silence, he had a tight urgent pressure in his chest to share his experience. To show them the promise

and endurance and the goodness that lay about them.

After he had finished his wine he got up and went down to the jeep. He sat on the fender, leaning his elbow on the bonnet and smoking a cigarette. In a little while, as he had hoped, Sergeant Logan came over to him and he offered him a cigarette. They smoked quietly, but with no constraint in their silence. The sergeant was leaning his forearms on the side of the jeep, and frowning in a worried way at the hazy blue peaks where the fighting was, where they were going.

'This is a pretty good country, eh?' MacAlla asked the sergeant.

'Yes,' the sergeant said, 'it's a nice country, sir, have you been here before?'

'Oh, yes,' MacAlla told him. 'Before the war I used to come here quite a lot. I generally stayed at a little village a bit up the road. You wait till you see that village, sergeant. It's dam' near perfect. It has everything a man should have in his community. After this war is over I'm going back there for two months, until I start thinking properly about things again.'

Sitting there on the jeep in the hot mountain sun, with the cool wind on him, he found it very easy to remember the village, and the bridge that led across the ravine and joined it to the road on the other side. He could see it exactly as it had been the first time.

It had been his first time abroad. He had come walking up this same road one very hot summer's day. The air had been full of the noise of bees and of the torrent further up the mountain sounding through the leaves. He had come to the village late in the afternoon. The roar of the torrent was louder and the afternoon light was hard as a diamond. By now, pines as well as chestnuts grew on the mountain slopes. Everything had been cool and subtly exciting, as if he were walking on the floor of a still, transparent lake.

The village when he came to it had been suddenly and beautifully carved against the mountain. Houses built on outcrops of rocks, or on platforms cut into the earth. The church on a round pinnacle, higher than the rest, with the cross against the deep sky, above the trees. Everything was softer and deeper in tone than it was on the plain. Only a few people to be seen, walking in a steady, unlanguid rhythm. When he had passed them, on the cobbled street under the grey walls, they looked at him with friendly curiosity.

He had not meant to stop that day in the village, however, until he saw the bridge. But it had been the bridge which made the village, and the bridge together with the village symbolised a pattern he had wanted to find for a long time, perhaps without knowing it.

He had kept on walking through the village, along the road and round the small spur that butted over the ravine. And here, as he had seen the bridge, he suddenly stopped. He had stopped as though a huge and invisible fist had been suddenly flung into his face. For a

long time that day he remained there, letting the first sight of the bridge come to him, not wanting to spoil the surprise of it all. He had learnt, then, for the first time, that everyone has his private vulnerable moment.

And now, thought Ian MacAlla, here I am, sitting on the fender of a jeep, in the middle of a war which I have disliked as much as I've ever disliked anything: and that bridge is going to be there, just because some kind fate decided to save this particular corner of sanity alive. He grinned suddenly at Logan ; the man grinned back, full of understanding. And MacAlla tried to tell him something about the bridge.

He told him about the columns plunging fifty feet down from the span into the bed of the torrent ; and the arches leaping across the ravine in small, lovely sweeps. How the stones had weathered for over 1,000 years into a warm golden surface that seemed, when you touched it, to quiver faintly like the hide of some perfectly magnificent animal. He also tried to tell him, but he was less successful, how, in the afternoons, the mountain hung its shadow across the road ; how the axes of the charcoal burners rang lazily down the mountain side ; and how the voices of the women in the ravine, as they squatted over their washing at the torrent's edge, drifted up like smoke on the golden air ; and of the road on the other side, winding like a ragged scar among the dark life of the trees. As they talked the faces of the two men became relaxed and full of confidence. They had been very close to each other on several occasions in the past few years, but this afternoon was the day they began to know each other really well.

After a while, when they had run out of things to say and had smoked another cigarette, MacAlla jumped off the fender into the old dust of the road.

' Ah well,' he said, ' let's go. Back to the bloody war.'

' Yes sir,' said the sergeant. His face was not relaxed or confident any more. ' Come on, Horsie,' he shouted to the private ' Mind your kidneys, sleeping in the damp.'

The private jumped up and came trotting down the bank, rubbing his eyes and yawning. He flung the side pack which had contained their rations into the seat. He got in, still sleepy, and wedged himself in the corner. MacAlla climbed in beside Logan in the front seat, and the sergeant put the jeep into gear and drove off.

All the way up the mountain road, coming to the village, MacAlla was silent, happy and nervous with anticipation. The chestnuts and pines stood as he remembered them, dark, cool, full of excitement and promise. Only the road had been damaged—rutted by the trucks and tanks of two armies.

' We'll get to the village in about five minutes,' he told Logan when they had been driving for about half an hour.

The sergeant was easing the jeep around a steep hairpin ; he

changed down, then as the wheels bit into the road and the engine caught on to the grade he turned to MacAlla and smiled very kindly.

'You want to stop in the village?' he asked. 'Do you have any friends there you want to see?'

'Yes,' MacAlla told him, 'I used to have quite a few friends there. I'm almost afraid to stop and ask how many are left, though. But I want to go on to the bridge first, I'd like to see that before anything.' He wondered if the people in the village, whom he had known before the war, would remember him, or recognise him now.

The village was all right, it hadn't been touched at all. The first thing he saw was the cross against the sky, above the trees. Then the rest of the houses, set hard and secure against the mountain. There was hardly anyone in the streets ; only a little boy leading a goat who drew aside and waved casually. MacAlla leant out of the jeep slightly, looking ahead along the road.

Going round the small spur that butted over the ravine where the bridge was, he foreknew something was going to be wrong. It came to him without warning, in a sudden, freezing breath. All at once he realised that on the other side of the spur he was going to take a beating, and he began to prepare for it.

He sat impassively as the sergeant spun the jeep round the spur and eased the vehicle over the massive iron planks of the military bridge that now crossed the ravine. MacAlla let the broken stumps of masonry, which were left from the old bridge, register on his mind. He felt perfectly blank and hollow. When they reached the other side he said to Logan,

'Stop the car.'

His voice was steady and officer-crisp ; but there was an emptiness in his chest and stomach.

He climbed out of the jeep and walked down the road to the new bridge. When he got out of earshot the private said,

'What's hit the old man, Sarge? He looks as if a ghost had kissed him.'

The sergeant let this go without answering. He did not even turn his head.

When MacAlla reached the pile of iron that had been flung across the ravine, he finally saw what had happened to the old bridge. It lay at the bottom of the shallow brown torrent in shattered heaps. Among the pieces was the huge, gaunt, German tank that had finally shaken the arch stones out and gone through to the bottom. The German engineers, he decided, must have blown up the rest of it to build the iron bridge. One side of him wondered why they hadn't dismantled when they had crossed ; he decided it must have been because they went through in such a hell of a hurry.

It was a good job they had done, he decided, as his boots clanged

distantly and mournfully on the iron planks of the bridge. This one should last nearly a fifth as long as the old one if it wasn't pulled down and replaced. Yes, he told himself, and slapped his heel down hard on the iron, a really good professional job.

He walked across it and on the other side turned down the little path that led to the women's washing place at the bottom of the ravine. He could hear their voices now. Halfway down the path he stopped. He looked at the squatting outline of the bridge and at the tank with its huge cannon pointing forlornly to the sky, the brown-green water of the torrent swirling round its tracks.

'Oh hell,' said MacAlla. 'Wouldn't you just know it.'

He went back up the path, across the bridge to the road where Logan had parked the jeep. He didn't want to see anyone in the village just now. The numbness and the sickness was wearing off; but there was a sterile, nasty taste of anger and impotence at the back of his throat. Also, he did not think what that bridge had represented could be replaced by his generation, and it was a very sad and bitter thing to know.

He got to the jeep and scrambled in again beside Logan.

'Let's go straight on,' he said, 'I'll come back later.'

'Yes, sir,' said Sergeant Logan, and started the engine. Then, 'I'm sorry about your bridge,' said the sergeant.

'That's all right, sergeant," MacAlla told him. 'It wasn't my goddam bridge anyway.'

J. E. M. LUCIE-SMITH

The Beggar

Admire the gothic beauty of my house:
How in the numerous vaulted corridors
I fix my tapestries, how in the solar
There hangs a looted triptych, in the hall
The board adorned with salts of parcel-gilt
Shines in the light of a great driftwood fire.

And then demand where are the waiting-women,
The men in livery, the men with flambeaux,
The pages, squires, and the attendant knights
Whose payments you have seen in my accounts?
Where is the chaplain? Or my children's tutor?
Where are my queen, my children, and myself?

Invisible, I take you by the hand
And lead you down the backstairs, to a place
Where, clothed in rags, there sits a vagabond
Among the ashes; mutely, I reply
That he, the indigent casual visitor,
Owns all this wealth, and is the very master.

SEYMOUR GRESSER

Scarab Progeny

I. The Dream

I sleep beside a blue swallow,
heavy though cold stone beds
are æons out of use,
hard though winter ground
has long forgotten the warm body of a man.

. . . in the beginning a stone
breathed water and conceive
itself a shape in the palm
of a man

I dream beside a blue daughter
no dæmon enters but myself,
no dream denies
death shifts from soul to body
stalking scarab progeny
whose laws come, as its kind, from itself
subject to no cage, I dream
the hunter and illusive prey.

In spring brushing frost from its loins,
three traps snapped and each
unfolded to my arms
the gnawed limbs of fearless beasts,
the milk of wild mouths white on the bones
and I a hunter brave beyond the arrow
raged the woods and cut the sacred cedar,
burned a satyr fire
and hid my body from the squalid century.

The dawn was swollen with feeding light,
bird and beast hungered at the trees
their unknown symmetry

that woodland, swan-throated river
one as wild berry my sleep my stone.

I heard the horned shape of a sacred city
born that morning out of frost and pain,
listened the steeple singing
pied-piper suppers for the weary and slain
and all about they flew and flocked
while I remained
and held my oxen to the altars,
caged my sheep and wolves and worms
and slept the deluge on cold black marble
beside the empty shadow
of a thin blue swallow.

QUENTIN STEVENSON

Requiescat in Pace

Two neat black gloves left crumpled on a desk,
Rocks curiously shaped upon a soil
Of polished walnut; over them a cave
Formed by a vase of raucous daffodils,
And in the background a great palm-tree growing,
The pea-green cover to an unused bulb.
And yet this still-life quality was not the reason
For this abandonment of self-possession,
This inability to take away
Eyes which disowned their harbour.
I would have liked to paint this picture, not to find
Adventurous colours, graceful shapes
In ordinary things, but to record
The person that I saw inside the gloves,
The frightened eyes and the once-beautiful mouth
And the hurt pride behind the chin and forehead.
For these gloves, left like the tattered remnants of a poem
Mostly forgotten, but its message kept
To tantalise the brain, took back my mind
To the sad woman who had owned them;
And I stared from the broad shadows where no atoms move
At her dead face, and found there no repose . . .
Only the mask of Honour, and the tears that never came.

THE LITERARY SITUATION — I

by Bernard Bergonzi

THE *Spectator* has recently been giving us a lesson in how a literary movement can, by vigorous and not over-subtle public relations methods, be suddenly transformed into *the* Movement, to which one must conform or be unfashionable. I can think, nevertheless, of a number of writers working just now who, given a similar publicity machine, might be groomed for stardom in a movement of a very different sort: poets like Mairi MacInnes, Hilary Corke, Alan Brownjohn, Charles Higham and Jon Silkin, whose verse has not a great deal in common, but who are all at least pursuing a more or less 'romantic' line, and are all equally removed from the 'neo-classical' or 'neo-metaphysical' predilections of 'the Movement' as now established. I find it hard to believe that there has ever been a period when one could talk without qualification simply of 'the' movement. Even in the 'thirties, now generally considered as the period when Auden, Spender and Day Lewis were dominating the poetic scene, one also had the Cambridge school of Empson, Bottrall and Madge, the incipient neo-romanticism of the young Dylan Thomas and George Barker, and the attempt of Herbert Read, David Gascoyne and others to transplant Surrealism to English soil.

In fact, after scraping away the exciting but not very meaningful epithets ('anti-phoney . . . anti-wet; sceptical, robust, ironic') that the *Spectator* sprinkled so liberally on the Movement, and looking carefully at the thing itself with an objective—even a cold—eye, I am struck by the thought that so much of its work has already been done, and done rather better. The Latter Day Empsonians, for instance, fade into nothingness when confronted with the poetry of the Master himself. Kingsley Amis, in *A Frame of Mind* and his Fantasy pamphlet, has a number of excellently written poems, but I cannot see that he has made any real advance on what Auden was already doing so brilliantly upwards of twenty years ago. The case of Donald Davie, a *soi-disant* 'pasticheur of late-Augustan styles,' is even more pointed. As a critic he is learned, readable, and always interesting, if a little pedestrian, but I find his poems, for the most part, merely the arid by-products of his highly efficient critical machinery. In fact, I am tempted to apply to Davie his own recent phrase about Edith Sitwell: 'no poet at all.' It is instructive to compare his verse with the early work of Charles Madge, and particularly with the series of poems called 'Delusions,' where Madge seems to have been drawing on similar literary sources, and certainly using a similar technique: the comparison brings out the distinction between the genuine minor poet and the rather hollow mannerist.

The point I am trying to make is that literary influences can either lead to a broadening out—where the poet has something of his own to add—or to a narrowing down, and it is the latter that seems to be most in evidence in the poets of the Movement. Fortunately, however, these strictures do not apply to all of them. Thom Gunn, for instance, has a strong and original voice, and is, I think, one of the best poets to have appeared since the war, while Philip Larkin is fundamentally a good lyrical poet, though he tends to spoil himself by adopting a tough, tight-lipped manner that does not really suit him.

It has already been remarked that somewhere in the background of the

Movement stands the minatory figure of Dr. Leavis: certainly the collapse of *Scrutiny* has in no way lessened the number of public genuflections made by provincial dons to 'the harsh hypnotic voice from Downing College.' Leavis has written criticism that will prove to be of lasting value, but his status has been exaggerated to an extent that is good neither for him nor for his many disciples. I have not so far seen any adequate reply to the brilliant dissection of Leavis made by Donald Carne-Ross in *Colonnade,* No. 1. However, it is not difficult to see why Leavis is so frequently invoked by academics, for one of his recurring doctrines is that the academic teacher of English is about the most important person in our society at the present time: this is certainly a comforting doctrine if one happens to have an academic job, but is chilly consolation to the rest of us, who are no less 'concerned about literature,' but who have to earn a living in some other way. Even John Wain, who is not lacking in good sense, has recently asserted that the teacher of English is now 'carrying the whole central weight.' I can think of various other people who are also carrying their fair share of the 'central weight.' I can even feel a little of it pressing on my own shoulders, though perhaps this is really only a chip, as an academic gentleman amiably suggested in a controversy in which I was recently engaged. Nevertheless, I find the attempt—intimately connected with the Movement—to impose a kind of academic closed shop on English letters sinister and alarming, and I would advise non-union writers to be on their guard. Certainly the younger dons have now no cause to complain of harsh treatment, since they are firmly established in the literary pages of a national weekly—the *Spectator*—and a widely-read monthly, *The Twentieth Century.*

George Orwell is another writer who has contributed something to the Movement: not, of course, to its verse, but to its pattern of ideas—at least as described in the *Spectator*—and especially to the novels of Wain and Amis. Miss Murdoch's *Under the Net,* incidentally, seems to me fundamentally of a different *genre*: a young woman's 'sensitive' post-Woolfian novel *à rebours,* with all the values ingeniously reversed, so that one has masculine for feminine, extravert for introvert, and active for passive: it is something of a *tour de force* in its way. Wyndham Lewis in Part IV of *The Writer and the Absolute* has described unkindly, but not, I think, unfairly, Orwell's attempts to escape from what he called his 'lower-upper-middle class' background, and one sees something of this in the endeavours of the hero of John Wain's *Hurry on Down* to deracinate and (to use this word in a somewhat neologistic sense) 'declassify' himself. Orwell was, of course, a most self-consciously *English* figure, and I suspect that the strong element of insularity in the Movement may derive from him. I view it with some suspicion; to react against the excesses of 'French 'flu' is very proper, but the reaction seems to be accompanied by a kind of brash and complacent philistinism—no doubt what the *Spectator* calls 'anti-wet'—that has at times a whiff of *Kulturbolschevismus* about it. I detect a certain note of this in Amis's always vigorous and amusing reviews in the *Spectator,* though I may be doing him an injustice here. But it is not unknown for a rigorous 'professional' concern for literature to be accompanied by a complete indifference, or even hostility, to culture in the broadest and deepest sense.

Perhaps I might finish by quoting from the Editorial of the first issue of *Colonnade,* a magazine whose early demise as an independent publication (it still survives in an etiolated form as a supplement to *Adam,* that perennial

purveyor of the chic and the modish) was something of a tragedy: 'What can, more explicitly, be asserted is a fidelity to the idea of a European tradition; a tradition embracing both the moral strenuousness of the Northern world and the grace and logic of Mediterranean culture. Our gaze, indeed, may seem intransigently confined to "the palms and temples of the South." For we believe that the sun, the olive and the vine, the lucid strength and serene order of the best Mediterranean art, are more likely to enrich our inorganic urban lives than any attempt to thicken, to consider too curiously, the confusions among which we dwell.' I can only applaud loudly, and hope that the able young men of the Movement will take the hint.

The Animals went in One by One . . .

New Poems, 1954. Edited by Rex Warner, Christopher Hassall and Laurie Lee. (Michael Joseph. 10/6.)

THE publication of an annual volume containing work by the best contemporary poets is both interesting and useful. During the last two years it has seemed that New Poems might have become such an anthology; so that it is all the more regrettable that the selection is as unaccountably eccentric as it is in this volume. The editors have published 100 poets, allowing a single poem to each. This in itself is indefensible, and has proved disastrous because of the high proportion of poems included—an astonishingly large number of them by unknown names—which are hardly worth printing at all. The sins of the editors, however, seem to be ones of omission as well as of commission. A book of contemporary poetry without Graves and Auden of the older names, and Heath-Stubbs and Larkin among the younger, resembles *Hamlet* not merely without the Prince of Denmark but also lacking Polonius, Ophelia, Fortinbras and the Gravedigger.

The better things in the book include the poems by Alan Ross, Elizabeth Jennings, Derek Stanford, Gwyn Williams, and N. K. Cruickshank's parodies of Edith Sitwell and W. R. Rodgers. Perhaps the most interesting poem from the point of view of the literary politician is Donald Davie's *Remembering the Thirties*, which is likely to become the classic statement of the supposed 'Fifties' attitude to the reigning generation:

A neutral tone is nowadays preferred.

'The Movement' is otherwise represented only by a good poem by Arthur Boyars, and a disappointing one by John Wain. Most of the better-known names (such as Norman Nicholson, G. S. Fraser, Patric Dickinson and Charles Causley) are far below their best.

I had never heard of forty-five of the poets represented (fifteen are published for the first time); only half-a-dozen show promise. The best seem to me to be John Press, Robin Herdman (two ex-Cambridge poets who share something of Davie's 'neutral tone') and Hugh Finn, while Claire McAllister

and G. J. Warnock have merit which is weakened by uncertainty of execution. The youngest contributor, Patrick Garland, writes as well as most, though his poem as a whole is not good. While most of the poets have avoided downright badness (notable exceptions are Caractacus Bryan and Theodore Stephanides) there is plenty here for the *sottisier*—fatuity, naivety, and an insensitive pomposity.

It might not be so good an idea as it sounds to change the editors each year, although the names of next year's lead one to expect better things. It is to be hoped that at some time in the future those responsible for choosing editors might find a place for Geoffrey Grigson, or George Fraser, or Anthony Hartley. While their literary tastes are by no means identical, each has intelligent discrimination and an undoubted familiarity with contemporary poetry—qualities which seem unfortunately absent in the present editors.

Gerald Wilcox

The Romantic Perception

The Peaceable Kingdom, by Jon Silkin. (Chatto and Windus. 6/-.)
A Charm Against the Toothache, by John Heath-Stubbs. (Methuen. 7/6.)
A Spring Journey, by James Kirkup. (Geoffrey Cumberlege: O.U.P. 8/6.)

THESE three books are by poets who would probably claim that they were Romantics—but that by design, rather than by an accident of temperament. There is something too well-planned in the attitude of the first two at least for their work to possess the qualities we tend to associate with Romantic poetry. Perhaps Mr. Heath-Stubbs is near it when he writes of his own 'classical romantic manner.' Other young poets of the fifties who could be bracketed with them tend increasingly to explore the implications of this classical-romantic philosophy. Their approach combines readiness to stimulate the emotions with awareness that, as far as they are concerned, the traditionally over-emotional or licentious poet is a thing of the past. A developed social conscience combines with the knowledge that society must rise to the standards of artist and scholar rather than the reverse, and they sense, too, the importance of discipline and technique in poetry without becoming preoccupied with a few stifling minor forms.

Mr. Silkin's book is both impressive and disconcerting. It disconcerts when it tells us how often the normal is interrupted by the catastrophic, or assumes the emotional proportions of catastrophe (as in *Carved,* or *The Cunning of an Age,* arresting allegories). But one is more inclined to like the unashamedly full-blooded poem here than in the violent yet precise work of a poet like Thom Gunn. Even in Mr. Silkin's poorer poems there is no falseness, no rehearsed toughness. And in the best poems here (*No Land Like It, Three Birds, Death of a Son*) the middle way between emotional force and formal impassivity is found. I can think of no poem written by a young poet in the last decade that moves so deeply, and yet with such impersonal relevance to all of us, as the

last of these three. The book, though enjoyable as a whole, would be worth its price for that alone.

Sometimes I have felt that Mr. Heath-Stubbs is moving towards a momentous Romantic simplicity rare in recent poetry ; and then the conventional poetic phrases, the scholarly denseness, the dry high-pitched whimsicality, and the self-conscious naughtiness creep back. This volume has something in each of these categories (though the title poem is a small triumph) but there is also something more: the newer long poems have more coherence and urgency, and the brilliant eccentric image is put to profounder use:

> ladies . . . For whom love was a dance on a glass floor,
> Tricky, with peacock steps, or posturings
> Of the white-tufted crane beside a sunset pool.

Perhaps a clearer pursuit of romantic convictions, allied with this growing ingenuity and profundity, would make Mr. Heath-Stubbs a very striking poet indeed.

Mr. Kirkup has been acclaimed and abused, most often for the wrong reasons. *Spring Journey* seems to me to be the work not of a poet on the level of the others, but of an accomplished *light* poet (or one who has become such). One could say he has no sense of climax, or obtrudes no 'presence' on the reader. But then, Mr. Kirkup's realm is the fancy, and his own plays everywhere with miscellaneous ease. The book cannot be read for intellectual or emotional stimulation, but it affords, at least, the pleasure of observing familiar things set in a sensitive framework by a likeable poetic narrator. Perhaps the poet aims no higher, but if he does, most poems here should be accounted failures and a severe stocktaking of diction, theme and output should be made.

Arthur Munro

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND POETRY CIRCLE

The present season of music and poetry meetings continues on the second Monday of each month until May (except April). The new address is Stanton Coit House, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, Kensington High Street, W.8. Tea is served at 6.15 and the programme begins at 7 p.m. The meetings are open to the public and admission is free (a silver collection is taken). This season's readers include John Heath-Stubbs, Derek Stanford, Muriel Spark, Bernard Bergonzi and Rex Warner.

SOME CONTRIBUTORS

JON SILKIN has contributed poems to *First Reading* and *New Verse* (BBC) and many literary magazines. *The Cunning of an Age* is included in his forthcoming volume, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Chatto and Windus).

MARGARET STRAHAN (Somerville College, Oxford) has contributed poems to Oxford magazines and to *Oxford Poetry 1953.*

KARL KROLOW (born 1915) is a prominent member of the contemporary school of German lyric poets led by Wilhelm Lehmann. His publications include *Gedichte* (1948), *Der Zeichen der Welt* (1952) and *Wind und Zeit* (1954) (poetry) and *Von nahen und fernen Dingen* (1953) (prose).

JOHN HEARNE has published poems in the *New Statesman.* He is at the moment living and working in France.

SEYMOUR GRESSER, American poet and sculptor, has published poetry in leading literary magazines on both sides of the Atlantic.

QUENTIN STEVENSON has published poems in Oxford magazines and is at present Secretary of the O.U. Poetry Society.

BERNARD BERGONZI has contributed poems and articles to the *New Statesman, First Reading* (BBC) and many literary magazines. He is Associate Editor of *Platform,* and a first volume of poems, *Descartes and the Animals,* is soon to appear.

GERALD WILCOX is a graduate of Durham University. He has reviewed in literary magazines and published a novel, *The Corrupting Wind.*

The poem, *The Death of the Referee,* was broadcast in *New Verse* and is included in *Unlucky Jonah,* a volume of PHILIP OAKES' poems published by the University of Reading.

Winter, 1954-5. DEPARTURE is published three times a year. Contributions of poetry, prose and criticism are welcomed. These should be accompanied by a stamped-addressed envelope or, if sent from abroad, by an International Reply Coupon, and should be addressed to the Editors *either* at 36 Fordel Road, Catford, London, S.E.6, *or* at Lincoln College, Oxford. Subscription: for single copy 1/2 or 25c post free. For one year 3/6 or 75c (American subscribers should send cash).